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SAVING ELBOW GREASE MAKES BETTER MUFFINS

Easy mixing methods made the best muffins in recent baking tests at the Bureau of Home Economics in the U. S. Department of Agriculture. These tests showed that the minimum of mixing produced the tenderest, lightest muffin of the most uniform texture. Too much beating caused holes or "tunnels" in the muffin, and also made the muffin peaked at the top.

The muffins that proved best in the test were the result of the easy, three-step mixing method. The first step was to sift all the dry ingredients together. The second was to combine the liquids - the lightly beaten eggs, the milk, and the melted fat. The third step was to add the liquid to the dry mixture, stirring just enough to moisten all the ingredients. The dough, still with a rough appearance, was put into greased muffin tins to bake in a hot oven for 20 minutes. By this method the muffins have only one brief mixing which prevents developing the gluten in the flour, thus causing tunnels and tough texture. Also by this method the baking powder has little chance to act until the muffins are in the oven. The tests showed, however, that this method is only successful if the liquid ingredients are at about the same temperature when combined. The eggs and milk should be at room temperature rather than chilled and the fat should be warm rather than hot.

In these tests, standard proportions for muffins were used: 2 cups of flour, 3 teaspoons of baking powder, ½ teaspoon of salt to 1 egg, 1 cup of milk, and 2 to 4 tablespoons of fat. It was found that a richer mixture containing more fat, more eggs, and considerable sweetening, could stand more mixing and could be made by the longer method of adding the melted fat last.

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